

"Confessions of an Engineer Turned Policy Maker: How I Survived Five Years of Massachusetts Politics and Returned Safely to Academia"

Michael D. Meyer, P.E., F.R. Dickerson Chair

Director, National Center for Transportation
System Productivity and Management

Georgia Tech

The Position

- Director, Transportation Planning and Development, Massachusetts (1983-1988)
- 250 employees/6,000 DOT employees/\$2 billion budget
- #2 or #3 in hierarchy, depending on how you counted
- Union and civil service (7 non-union management)
- Political appointee
- Represented state nationally

Me

- 31 years old (ave. age = 58)
- Ph.D.
- MIT professor
- P.E. (but in charge of planning?)
- Wisconsin native
- Didn't have a funny accent

....although I did hate the Yankees!!

Observations

L'Etat, c'est moi

A political appointee is not
the strongest position to be
in....especially if you are
“different” (or why is there a
bottle of cheap apple wine on
my desk?)

Beware the Ides of March

Ides of April

Ides of May

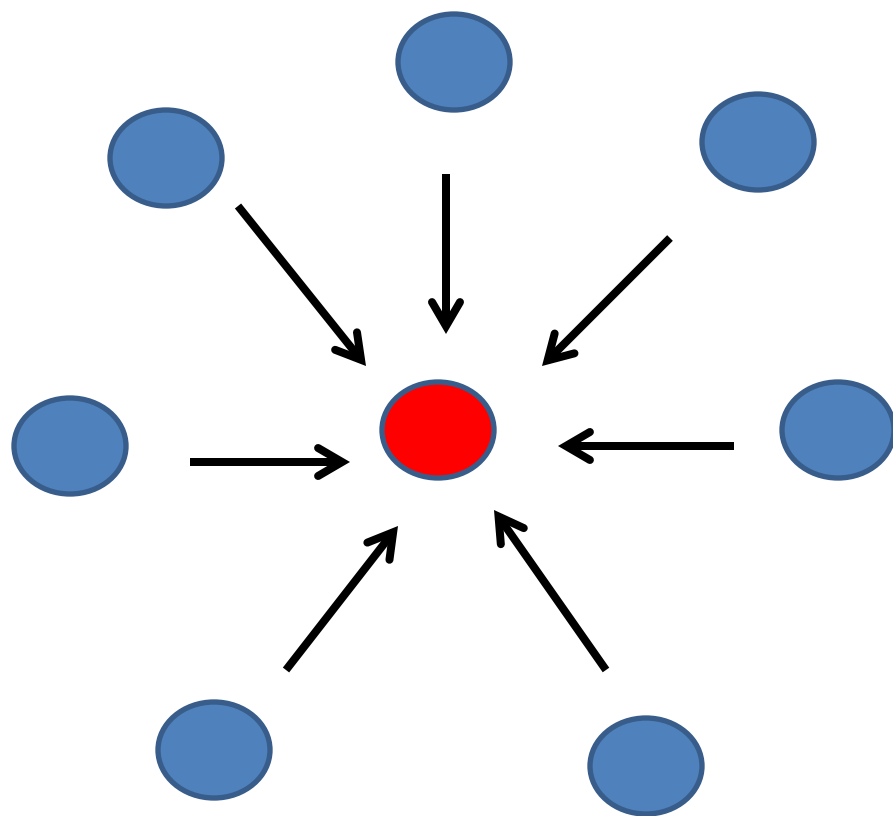
Ides of June

Ides July

o

o

o



Connect yourself to
AUTHORITY
(or at least assume it)



Dangerous

The grapevine goes
both ways

Find “George”

Get some early victories
(inside the agency)
...establish “cred”

I beat George!!!!

The “Meyer” arbitration finding

Get some early victories
(external to the agency).....or
why new signs and paint can
go a long way

Southeast Expressway



Perception is 99.999999% of
the battle...the battle with
the media

DAILY TRANSCRIPT

"For the first two or three weeks, expect chaos....After that, we hope, we'll adapt."

East Expressway Survival kit

Report was compiled by Gary McMillan of the Globe staff from contributing reporter Philip Bennett.

The Northeast Expressway, the major highway for about 150,000 vehicles traveling between downtown Boston and southern Massachusetts, will be rebuilt over a two-year period beginning Monday, 19.

Traffic that now fills eight lanes during rush hour will be compressed into six. "For the first two or three weeks, expect chaos," said Michael Meyer, director of the Bureau of Transportation Planning and Development for the state Department of Public Works (DPW). "After that, we hope, we'll adapt."

The state has spent five years planning the reconstruction and more than a year planning for the traffic nightmare that will accompany it. Based on information supplied by the DPW and other agencies, here is a primer on what is happening and what is being done to help you cope with it.



DPW Commissioner Robert Tierney points out damaged bridge.

UPI photo

Brace yourself: Expressway work starts Monday

By Jim Kelly
Patriot Ledger Staff

In the darkness and cold of the Monday dawn, the two-year, \$63 million Southeast Expressway reconstruction project will officially start.

In less than 48 hours, crews will be out on the southbound expressway lanes installing steel, cement and plastic barriers. By the end of the week, all the barriers will be in place and traffic will be squeezed into six lanes where there used to be eight.

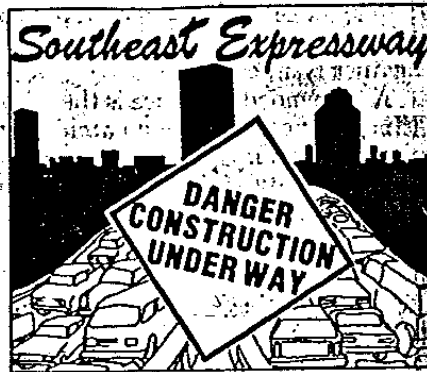
Here's what state officials say will happen Monday:

- From 7 a.m. to about noon, workers will be installing concrete Jersey barriers in the two left southbound lanes, which will be closed. The crews will start in Boston and work south.

The four northbound lanes will be open Monday morning. The northbound lanes won't be affected by the barrier installation, but DPW workers will be on the shoulder and in the median installing lights and setting up equipment.

- At noon, work in the southbound lanes will stop in preparation for the evening rush. The two left lanes will be opened. The southbound roadway will be separated for about two miles by barriers; drivers on the right will use the break-down lane.

- After the evening rush, at about 7 p.m., crews will be back in the two left southbound lanes installing barriers.



A special 7-page report on Hub's roads and traffic

The Boston Herald

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WHAT 2-YR X-WAY JOB MEANS TO MOTORISTS

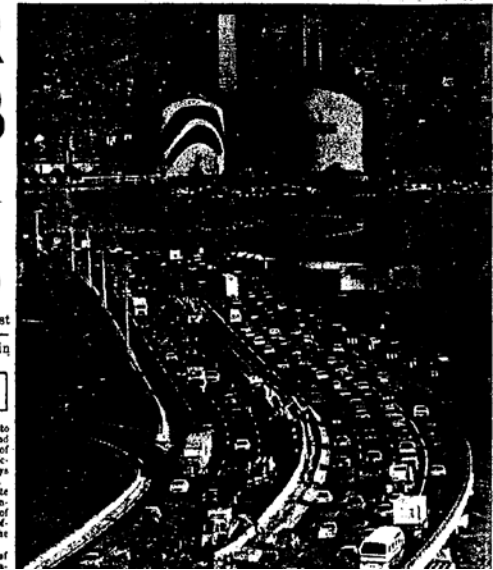
THE DREADED reconstruction of the crumbling Southeast Expressway, the state's busiest highway, begins March 19 — stalling more commuters longer than any single event in Massachusetts history.

The 8.3-mile repair project between Dorchester and Braintree will take two years to complete, cost a record \$65 million and require the monumental patience and cooperation of 150,000 daily drivers and their thousands of passengers.

Already labeled the "Southeast Distressway" and "world's largest parking lot," the X-way is now being blazed by skeptics to the "Great

Text by JOE HEANEY; Staff serial photos by KEVIN TWOMBLY

riders after fire last month destroyed the truck-supporting piers. For the next nine months to a year, riders from the north and west will continue to detour and transfer to MBTA rapid transit lines. Reconstruction costs are estimated at \$6-to-\$8 million. Pushing forward on a controversial \$2.2-billion project, from March to November of 1984 and March to November of 1985, with traffic restrictions in effect seven days a week, 24 hours a day. And despite alternate routes, alternate transportation and months of contingency planning, officials acknowledge the potential for chaos. State Department of Public Works Committee.



Flexing out of chaos

GLOBE 2/22/84

In a few short weeks commuters from south of Boston will have to face major disruption on the Southeast Expressway as a two-year rehabilitation project moves into full swing. Unless significant adjustments are made by those affected, slow will be the operating motto for travelers for a long time to come. Fortunately, employers have a chance to ease the problem by making some minor changes in working hours and can learn more at a conference scheduled for tomorrow. They should attend.

The conference, organized by the state's transportation secretariat, has broad-based support from public and private organizations, including the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce and its South Shore counterpart, as well as MassPort and the MBTA. Day-long sessions will be held at the Park Plaza Hotel.

Centerpiece of the conference is a concept that has application beyond the specific needs created by the expressway project. Flexible

Several useful models for flexible workdays offer real promise of relief for commuters. Back Bay employers, notably the big insurance companies, have staggered their work hours to relieve pressure on the MBTA's Green Line, with visible success on a notorious scene of congestion. More recently, staggered worktimes were used in Connecticut to lessen congestion following collapse of the Mianus bridge last year. An organizer of that program, Michael Breen, is to deliver the luncheon speech.

Employers in both the public and private sector can help prevent everyone's worst fears from being realized by taking part in the program and implementing at least some of its features. Even employers north of the city who have employees commuting from the south should consider participation to avoid imposing avoidable discomfort for all.

Longer term, flexible work hours offer a bet-

“I didn’t say that.....”

or

Watch out for the 6:00
news!!



MICHAEL D. Meyer
Development
is needed to e



Marly Johnson —
"I think I feel any better,
I feel wiser."

From Page One

Headaches Ahead For Cape Cod

Continued
Boston.

"The Cape has many high-tech industries that need to use Logan on a regular basis," said Keith E. Songer of Fern Engineers. "What will they do?"

"When possible, they should try to fly into Boston from the Cape," Dr. Meyer said.

\$260,000 On Advertising

Offering alternatives for commuters is a major part of the reconstruction campaign. The federal government has given Dr. Meyer's department \$260,000 to spend on public information about the project.

According to Dr. Meyer, the expressway was intended to

accommodate an average of 75,000 vehicles a day when designed in the 1950's. Now, more than twice that number travel the expressway daily.

The high volume of traffic has resulted in over \$14 million worth of maintenance repairs, he said.

Despite repairs, a recent inspection of the road showed that a majority of the bridges are in advanced stages of deterioration. Traffic accidents on the expressway make up more than twice the annual average for comparable roads in the Commonwealth.

Dr. Meyer had to admit that the repairs, though essential, would not increase the road's capacity

for traffic.

"I know you're wondering — we're spending \$60 million and taking two years and we're going to have the same road after," he said.

"Why don't you redesign it to handle increased traffic flow," asked Gerald R. Humphrey.



Dr. Michael Meyer — "It's bad news, I'm sorry, but it's a project that's absolutely essential. The bridges are falling down."

Expressway project 'a challenge,' MIT professor Meyer says

By Della Klemovich
Patriot Ledger Staff

BOSTON — Michael D. Meyer says it's well known that professors often fail at government jobs.

So why is Meyer, a 31-year-old associate professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, on leave to direct the Bureau of Transportation Planning and Development for the state Department of Public Works?

And why did he consent to advise DPW Commissioner Robert Tierney and state Transportation Secretary Fred Salvucci on the Southeast Expressway reconstruction project, the most expensive and probably the most controversial road project ever undertaken by the state?

"It's a challenge," Meyer says.

His goal is to create a "transportation strategy" for the South Shore, the state's fastest growing area.

Meyer said the two-year expressway rebuilding project may prove to be a blessing in disguise — if it leads to permanent changes in South Shore commuting habits.

The South Shore doesn't have "major highway capacity" now, and the reconstruction project won't change that, Meyer said. The roadwork will only rebuild, not expand, the highway.

"But the South Shore actually has more transportation options than anywhere — commuter rail, commuter boat, ride sharing, rapid transit, public and private bus service," Meyer said.

And what the expressway project will do is force a lot of people to use those services, instead of the family car. Transportation officials say the estimated 2,500 cars an hour that use the road during peak commuting hours

won't fit on the expressway, once work gets under way in March.

Meyer hopes those crowded out will stay off the road even when the work is complete. He and other state officials have been working for months to improve bus, rail, vanpooling and rapid transit service.

And he has done his job well during the nine months he has been there, according to Salvucci.

"He has an important coordinating role," Salvucci said. The two met while both were teaching at MIT. Salvucci describes Meyer as "bright and very knowledgeable."

Not everyone, however, is happy with the planning so far on the expressway project.

"Just the fact state officials are taking such measures is testimony to past neglect of the South Shore's transportation needs," says Gerald Connolly, general manager of the AAA automobile club in Southeastern Massachusetts. AAA executives serve on several committees devoted to easing the commuting nightmare that is almost certain to occur.

"I feel economic growth on the South Shore is already being stymied," Connolly said. "I'm surprised the business people haven't been madder."

Meyer said he knew he would come in for some criticism when he took the job, but he entered public service because his personal and professional education wouldn't be complete without it.



Michael Meyer

File photo



You want credit?... (LOL)

A crisis is a good thing

Don't forget the
rats....flexibility in approach

“Damn the SOPs, full speed ahead.”

Paraphrase of Admiral Farragut

Or why the asterisk is the most
important indicator in the English language

Or why “it all depends” is a great answer

“Oh, oh” design approach

Problem Def'n → Subdivide into parts → Design parts → Oh, oh! → Mitigate

Environmental context → Problem Def'n → Systems design → Manage

What's \$3,300,000,000
among friends?
(especially when it turns out
to be \$16,000,000,000)

“Strategic” is what is going to
happen tomorrow

Remember, this was an
engineering-oriented agency

Decisions before planning?

That is not what the
textbooks say

These are our elected
officials??????

Hire good people...the “flying-I
formation”

Make sure your power base is
covered

Institutionalize,
Institutionalize,
Institutionalize

An engineer who can speak
in public becomes a hot
commodity

“That is a good point...we’ll get back to you,” or why I was “the most dangerous man in Massachusetts”

In summary.....

Was it fun? Absolutely

Did I learn a lot? Yes

Has it helped my career? Yes
(became known as a professor who had
been “in the trenches”)

Would I do it again? Yes